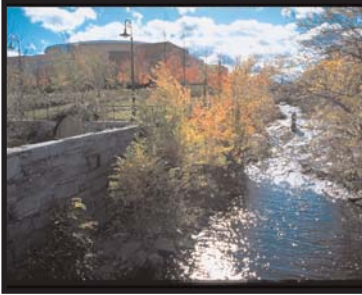


*The Tsongas Arena Overlooking the Merrimack River*

# 5

## UNIQUE WATERFRONT ENVIRONMENTS

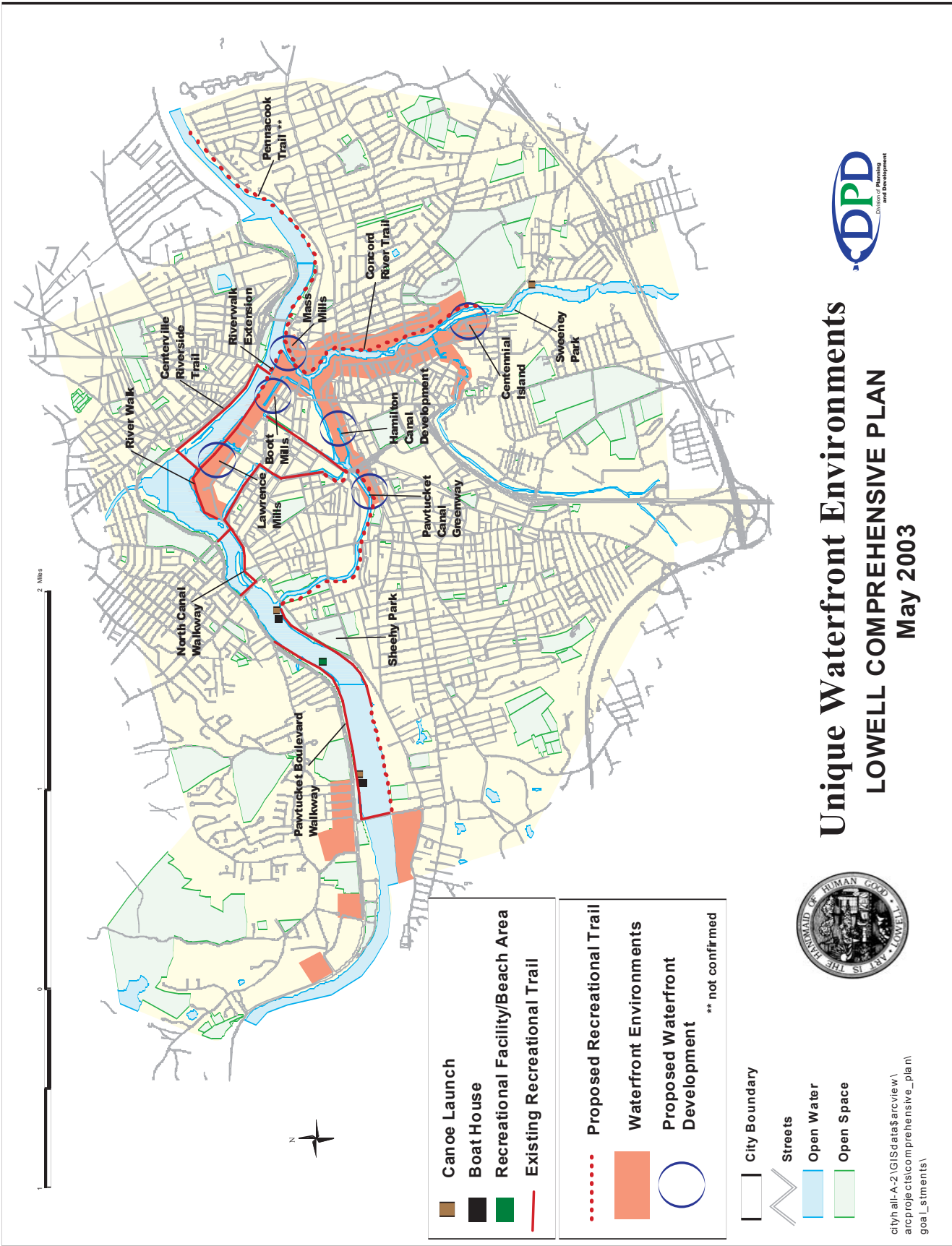
***Goal Statement***

Lowell's historic canals and scenic rivers will be home to unique residential and mixed-use development communities with strong connections to existing neighborhoods.

Once referred to as "the Venice of America," the City of Lowell is a distinct urban community uniquely positioned at the confluence of the Merrimack and Concord Rivers, amongst a system of historic and scenic canals. This blending of the urban and natural environment provides Lowell's residents with an exceptional residential atmosphere that takes advantage of both amenities.

It is the natural landscape that initially attracted Lowell's early settlers, and the power of the moving water that attracted its industrial development. Today the rivers and canals are still considered one of the City's most important resources. The property along the waterways provides the greatest opportunity for the future development of urban villages. By promoting appropriate site layout, the development of these areas can increase physical and visual access of the rivers and canals, and will allow their full potential to be realized.

These waterfront settings provide Lowell's best chance to capitalize on the national trend of renewed interest in urban living. Young creative professionals, empty-nest households, immigrant families, and others have recognized the attractions of urban lifestyles, including proximity to employment and amenities, as well as the stimulation of community. Most important however, is the opportunity to find a unique living and working environment in the face of increasingly homogeneous suburban landscapes. Lowell's waterways and the former industrial buildings that line them can be reinvented for these residents, allowing the City to increase its housing supply and create new communities while minimizing impacts on existing neighborhoods.





## 5.1 Recommendations and Action Steps:

### 5.1.1 IDENTIFY SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITIES TO ENCOURAGE THE REDEVELOPMENT OF FORMER INDUSTRIAL AND OTHER UNDERUTILIZED WATERFRONT PROPERTY FOR UNIQUE RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED-USE PROJECTS AIMED AT CREATIVE CLASS PROFESSIONALS, EMPTY-NESTERS, AND ACTIVE SENIORS.

**Action Step:** Conduct a comprehensive survey of waterfront property, evaluating assets and potential impediments to redevelopment.

**Action Step:** Revise current zoning and land use regulations to encourage the development and protection of the vital and unique residential environments sought by creative class workers, empty nesters, and active seniors, particularly along the Concord and Merrimack Rivers and the Pawtucket Canal.

**Action Step:** Prepare design standards and recommendations to insure that these renovations and new construction capitalize on the unique setting provided by the waterfront assets and historic character of existing mill architecture.

**Figure 5-1**

**Enhancing Access to the Waterfront with Development: Washington's Landing, Pittsburg**



**Action Step:** Develop building typologies and site layouts for waterfront parcels that insure their development will respect the character of the surrounding neighborhood, provide recreational space, and maintain ecological function.

**Action Step:** Utilize federal and state funding resources available for brownfields to test, remediate, and convert abandoned industrial property for mixed-use developments.

### 5.1.2 ENHANCE WATERFRONT ACCESS AND RECREATIONAL AMENITIES.

**Action Step:** Implement and fully fund the multi-party agreement to insure that the canals are properly and regularly cleaned.

**Action Step:** Enhance the visibility of waterways from neighboring public streets and squares, strengthening their connection to existing neighborhoods and improving the real and perceived safety of waterfront areas.

**Action Step:** Expand and integrate the network of walkways along the canals and rivers as recreational and functional pedestrian and bicycle transportation corridors.

**Action Step:** Identify opportunities to expand existing recreational areas and create new parks along waterways.

**Action Step:** Improve maintenance of infrastructure (rails, lighting, benches, paving, landscaping, etc.), access, safety, and connections among existing walkways and park areas along waterfronts.

**Action Step:** Promote public and quasi-public institutional uses along waterfronts. Encourage institutions with waterfront property to provide access, visibility, and/or entry points between their buildings and waterfront areas.

**Action Step:** Amend the zoning code to require developers to provide public access along the waterfront, and prevent the creation of new barriers to waterfront areas.

### 5.1.3 ENCOURAGE USAGE OF WATERFRONT AREAS BY ABUTTING COMMERCIAL PROPERTY OWNERS, ESPECIALLY ALONG ESTABLISHED WALKWAYS.

**Figure 5-3**  
**Restaurants and Housing along the Waterfront in Waltham, MA**



**Action Step:** Provide economic development assistance for businesses interested in waterfront property.

**Figure 5-2**  
**Concord River Greenway**



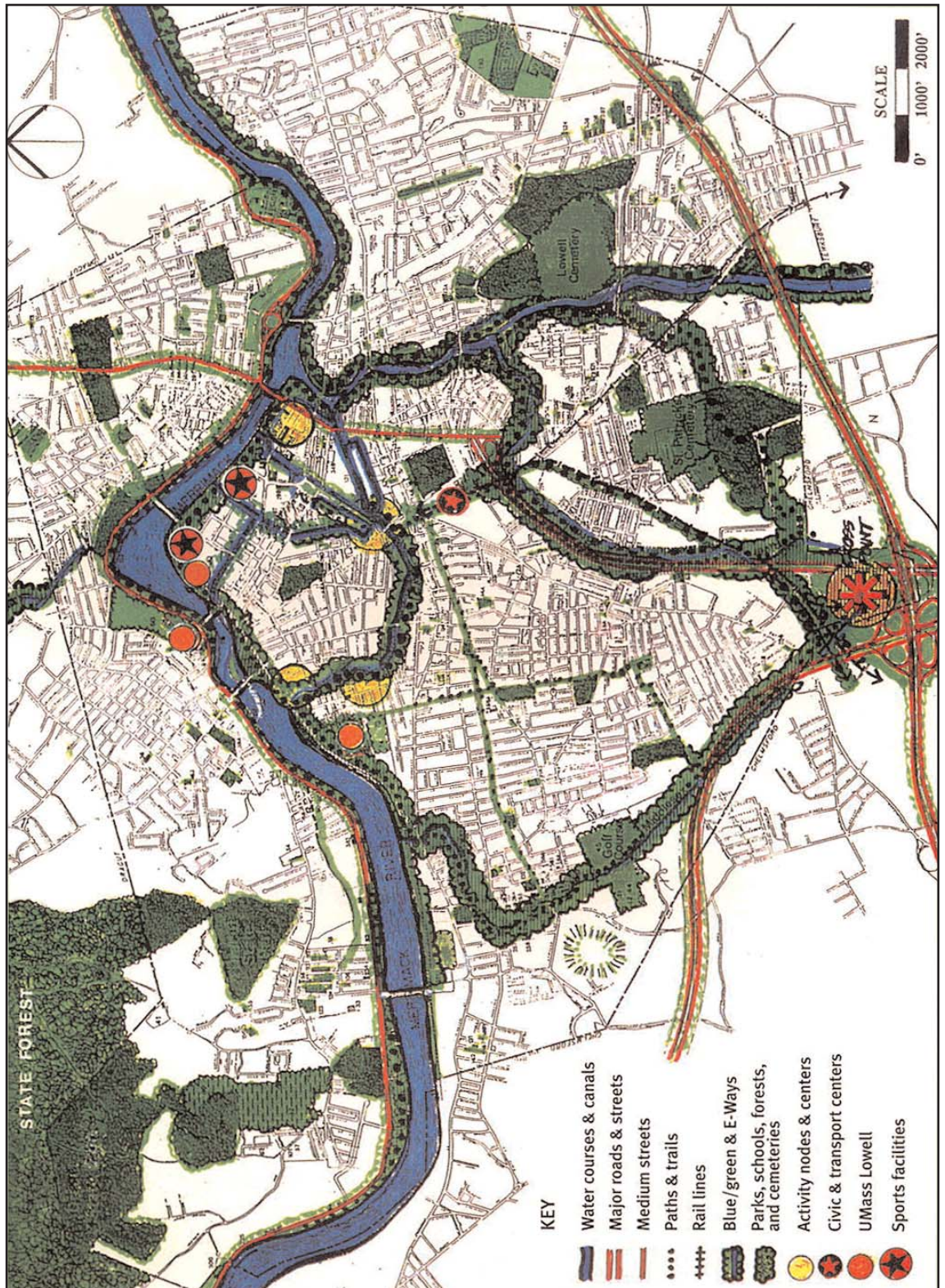
**Action Step:** Establish a regulatory framework that encourages outdoor cafes along and retail entrances from riverfront and canalside walkways.

**Figure 5-4**  
**Waterfront Usage in San Antonio, TX**





**Figure 5-5**  
**Environmental and Recreational Loops**





**Action Step:** Incorporate considerations of waterfront usage and connections in site plan and other design review processes as well as in City of Lowell RFPs and development projects for waterfront property.

#### 5.1.4 EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE TO PROTECT THE REMAINING PARCELS OF WETLANDS AND PREVENT FURTHER ENCROACHMENT.

**Action Step:** Facilitate the acquisition of valuable and sensitive areas by not-for-profit land trusts.

**Action Step:** Promote education about open space and conservation so the community better understands their importance and significance.

**Action Step:** Work with the Lowell Conservation Commission to establish design standards and regulations for waterfront development that respect and protect the natural resources that are central to the appeal of these areas.

**Figure 5-6**  
**Black Brook Wetlands**



#### 5.1.5 COORDINATE WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT WITH EXISTING AND FUTURE TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS AND CORRIDORS.

**Figure 5-7**  
**Canalside Walkway**



**Action Step:** Provide safe pedestrian crossings over roadways and railroads to riverfront parks and the waterfronts of potential development sites.

**Figure 5-8**  
**Pedestrian Overpass: Seattle**



**Action Step:** Connect riverfront and canal-side walkways with one another and with major destinations to encourage their use as alternative transportation corridors as well as recreation paths.